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ABSTRACT

Information pertaining to the accrediting program of the National League for Nursing (NLN) is organized in three major areas: (1) an introduction to the NLN accrediting program in nursing education, and the principles and purposes of NLN accreditation, (2) accrediting policies, procedures, and criteria, including a discussion of the role of faculties, advisory committee members, and councils of agency members in the accrediting process, and (3) policies and procedures in the accrediting process. The process of accreditation is further described in terms of: (1) determination of eligibility, (2) initiation of the process, (3) self-evaluation study and writing of the self-evaluation report, (4) accreditation visit, (5) evaluation by the appropriate board of review, (6) continuing self-evaluation and ongoing program development, (7) a listing of accredited programs, and (8) confidentiality of accreditation information. This is a revision of ED 032 422. (SB)

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Policies and Procedures of Accreditation For Programs in Nursing Education

Associate Degree Programs

Baccalaureate and Higher Degree Programs

Diploma Programs

Practical Nursing Programs

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POLICIES AND PROCEDURES OF ACCREDITATION FOR PROGRAMS IN NURSING EDUCATION

- Associate Degree Programs
- Baccalaureate and Higher Degree Programs
- Diploma Programs
- Practical Nursing Programs

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THE ACCREDITING PROGRAM OF THE NATIONAL LEAGUE FOR NURSING FOR PROGRAMS IN NURSING EDUCATION

Introduction

The accreditation of educational programs in nursing is one of the ways in which the National League for Nursing fosters the development and improvement of nursing education to the end that the nursing needs of the people will be met. NLN's acceptance of this responsibility is expressed in its bylaws. The NLN accrediting services for the various types of educational programs in nursing are administered and conducted through four departmental units of the organization's national headquarters: the Department of Associate Degree Programs, the Department of Baccalaureate and Higher Degree Programs, the Department of Diploma Programs, and the Department of Practical Nursing Programs. Each department is responsible for the type or types of programs designated in its title.

NLN is officially recognized as the national accrediting agency for nursing education by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The Department of Associate Degree Programs and the Department of Baccalaureate and Higher Degree Programs are also recognized by the National Commission on Accrediting and by the regional accrediting associations.

Historically, nursing has a long record of voluntary efforts to raise its educational standards. Accreditation has played an essential role in the improvement of nursing education. Accrediting activities in nursing education, begun by many different nursing organizations during the 1920's and the 1930's, were centralized in the National Nursing Accrediting Service in 1949. When several national nursing organizations united to form the National League for Nursing in 1952, accrediting in nursing education became the function of NLN's Division of Nursing Education. In November, 1958, the NLN Board of Directors established a policy that gave each educational department the freedom to develop its own accrediting program according to its needs, provided that the policies and procedures were consistent with the NLN principles of accreditation.

The accrediting services of NLN are available to: (1) junior and senior colleges and universities that offer programs in nursing leading to an associate degree, (2) senior colleges and universities that offer programs in nursing leading to a baccalaureate or a masters degree, (3) hospital schools and independent bodies that offer programs in nursing leading to a diploma, and (4) public vocational schools, hospitals, junior and senior colleges, and universities that offer

programs in practical nursing leading to a certificate. Participation in the NLN accrediting program by an educational unit in nursing is voluntary.

The Principles of NLN Accreditation

The policies, criteria, and procedures followed in accrediting educational programs in nursing are based on principles widely accepted and tested in general and professional education.

Accreditation in nursing is conceived as a program in which the educational units themselves play a vital part. In the process, every effort is made to involve all administrative and teaching staff and students of each educational unit in its own self-evaluation and thus to encourage self-improvement.

Criteria for accreditation must change as the profession itself evolves and as the society it serves changes. The continuing development of criteria is the responsibility of the educational units in nursing within the institutions that are agency members of NLN. This function rests with appropriate councils of agency members.

The individuality of institutions and their special contributions are of paramount importance. Therefore, emphasis is placed upon the evaluation of the total program and its general excellence as well as upon its achievement with regard to its stated objectives.

The National League for Nursing actively seeks to gain from various groups their understanding, assistance, and support in its continuous efforts to improve nursing education through the accreditation of educational programs in nursing. Such groups include, among others, the National Commission on Accrediting, the regional accrediting agencies in higher education, the American Nurses' Association, the agency in each state that is legally authorized to license nurses to practice, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals, other related groups (general education, hospital administration, medicine, public health), and the public.

The Purposes of NLN Accreditation

The purposes of accreditation of programs in nursing are:

1. To foster continuous improvement of programs in nursing throughout the United States and its territories and thus to promote improvement of nursing services.
2. To involve the faculties and students of nursing programs in the process of continuous self-evaluation and improvement of their programs.
3. To evaluate nursing programs in terms of their ability to meet their own purposes and the NLN criteria for accreditation.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACCREDITING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AND THE CRITERIA

Keeping the accrediting policies and procedures and the criteria current is a continuous process. If programs are dynamic and adaptable to the changing needs of both students and society, then ways of evaluating them need to change correspondingly.

To maintain the soundness and value of accrediting services, all those concerned must be constantly alert to current developments in education and nursing, to the effectiveness of current policies, procedures, and criteria, and to evidence of need for change. It is also mandatory that a thorough review of all policies, procedures, and criteria be undertaken whenever the need for reconsideration of them becomes apparent and, in any case, at frequent enough intervals to prevent gradual, unrealized obsolescence.

The Role of Faculties in the Accrediting Process

Faculties of educational units in nursing have the major role in the whole process of accreditation. They establish policies and practices for their individual nursing programs and determine goals for the overall development of nursing education. Faculties share the responsibility for initiating reconsideration of any part or the whole of the accrediting process. When recommended revisions of policies, procedures, or criteria are under consideration, faculty members participate in the process of revision in their schools and in their respective councils.

Faculty members are directly involved in the accreditation process as visitors to other programs and as participants during visits to their own programs. They may also serve as members of the boards of review, the executive committees of the councils, the appeal panels, and ad hoc committees. They play a vital part, individually and as faculty groups, in the development and maintenance of sound accreditation services for the benefit of nursing education, the nursing profession, and society.

The Councils of Agency Members

The four councils that represent nursing education are a part of the Division of Agency Members of the National League for Nursing. The general purpose

of these councils is the continuous development and improvement of education in nursing. Each council has a primary concern for the development and improvement of the type of educational program or programs designated in its title. Agency membership in NLN and in the councils is open to educational units, divisions, and departments that conduct programs in nursing education.

Each council's functions and responsibilities include the development and approval of:

1. Criteria for the appraisal of programs in nursing of the type with which the particular council is concerned.
2. Policies and procedures of accreditation of the type with which the particular council is concerned.

Each agency member of a council designates two persons to function as its official representatives in the affairs of the council and to vote on its behalf at council meetings.

In the case of the Council of Baccalaureate and Higher Degree Programs and of the Council of Diploma Programs, only the representatives of NLN-accredited programs are eligible to vote on matters pertaining to accreditation.

Committees of the Councils

The executive committee of each council is responsible for guiding the affairs of the council and for the appointment of the board of review, the appeal panel, and special or ad hoc committees to carry out specific tasks related to accreditation. On the basis of recommendations, the special or ad hoc committees develop tentative drafts of the material required, such as revisions of criteria. The drafts are circulated to agency members for faculty review and comment and are revised in the light of the reactions and comments received. The final draft is submitted to the council for approval. The entire process preceding official adoption and publication of a revised document represents the time, work, and judgment of many persons directly involved in nursing education of the type to which the document pertains.

The Advisory Committee on Accrediting Procedures

In 1965, the NLN Board of Directors established the Advisory Committee on Accreditation Policies and Procedures to act in an advisory capacity to NLN staff. The NLN Board appoints the members of the committee, which is composed of nurse educators and general educators with experience in the field of accreditation, a representative of the National Commission on Accrediting, and a representative of the Federation of Regional Accrediting Commissions of Higher Education.

THE ACCREDITING PROCESS — POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The administrative officers and the faculty of an educational unit offering a program in nursing who wish to seek NLN accreditation of their program need to understand the standards that apply and the related policies and procedures of the accrediting process. The official criteria for the evaluation of each of the types of educational programs in nursing adopted by the respective councils[1] are available on request from NLN, and early procurement of the appropriate document is essential inasmuch as the current criteria serve, in the final analysis, as the basis for the entire accrediting process.

The process of accrediting a program in nursing involves six stages: (1) determination of eligibility for NLN evaluation, (2) initiation of the process, (3) the self-evaluation study and the writing of the self-evaluation report, (4) the accreditation visit, (5) evaluation by the appropriate board of review, and (6) continuing self-evaluation and ongoing program development. For some programs, there may be a seventh stage involving the submission of additional information to the board of review.

Throughout the following pages, the policies that govern accreditation are printed in boldface type in order to differentiate them from the procedures that are followed.

Stage I—Determination of Eligibility For NLN Evaluation

A program in nursing education is eligible for evaluation for NLN accreditation when the following conditions exist:

1. **The program has the essential elements in operation; that is, at least one class of students has completed or is nearing completion of the program.**
2. **The program is currently approved without qualification by the appropriate state board of nursing, unless it is a new associate degree program, in which case it is approved by the state board of nursing to admit and to graduate students.**

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1. *Criteria for the Evaluation of Educational Programs in Nursing Leading to an Associate Degree*. (Publication Number 23-1258.)
   Criteria for the Appraisal of Baccalaureate and Higher Degree Programs in Nursing. (Publication Number 15-1251.)
   Criteria for the Evaluation of Diploma Programs in Nursing. (Publication Number 16-1370.)
   Criteria for the Evaluation of Educational Programs in Practical Nursing. (Publication Number 38-1178.)

3. **The institution offering the program is legally authorized to grant the degree, diploma, or certificate to which the program leads.**
4. **The institution offering the program is accredited by the appropriate accrediting agency.**
   a. **If the program is controlled by a college or university, the institution is accredited by the appropriate regional accrediting association, unless the program is an associate degree program, in which case the institution has recognized status with the regional accrediting association.**
   b. **If the program is controlled by a medical college or university, (1) the institution is accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education and (2) the college or university offering the academic courses in the curriculum is approved by the appropriate regional accrediting association.**
   c. **If the program is controlled by a hospital, the hospital is accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals.**
   d. **If the program is controlled by a vocational school, the school is approved by the state board for vocational education.**

Stage 2—Initiation of the Process

When the faculty anticipates applying for NLN accreditation, it may request information or advice from NLN at any stage in this development. Members of the particular staff answer questions by mail, arrange for office conferences by appointment, and provide consultation services if faculties seek assistance in interpreting general principles in their application to a particular situation.

The faculty and the administrative officers of the program decide when, in their opinion, based on their self-study in terms of NLN criteria, the program is ready for evaluation.

An institution that offers a program not previously accredited by NLN initiates the process through the administrator's communicating to the appropriate NLN department the decision to plan for accreditation. This communication should be made in advance of the time when, in the view of the faculty, the program will be ready for an accreditation visit. In response, the department will send informational materials and ask the school to complete appropriate forms.

Planning for a reevaluation of a program may be initiated in one of two ways: (1) the NLN department notifies the program that a revisit is pending; (2) the administrator of the program(s) communicates with NLN in regard to an earlier revisit or a delayed revisit. In either case, the NLN department sends informational materials together with the request that an authorization form be completed and signed by the administrative officers of the institution.

Stage 3—The Self-Evaluation Process and the Writing of the Self-Evaluation Report

The process of self-evaluation must be viewed as a responsibility inherent in education for nursing and in the continuing development of the institution offering a program of study. Self-evaluation has many characteristics, some of which are as follows:

- It is planned and organized systematically so as to carry out evaluative activities on an ongoing basis.
- It serves to point out the strengths of the program.
- It helps to diagnose difficulties in the program.
- It provides a basis for making decisions about needed improvements.
- It sets sights on approaches that reflect advancements in the operation of the institution and in the educational orientation of the program of study.
- It involves the participation of all those concerned with the program.
- It leads to realization by all those involved that the educational unit has many component parts—students, faculty, other personnel, a program of study, services, resources, and facilities—each of which relates to or affects the others.
- It leads to realization by all those involved that decisions and revisions that affect any one of the component parts will affect to varying degrees some or all of the other parts.

The self-evaluation studies and activities that precede the writing of the report should be a major undertaking and not merely a cursory review of the *status quo*. The faculty must understand and thoroughly assess where they are in order to determine where they want to go and the means by which they can achieve the goals they have set for the unit in nursing. The activities include: (1) a thorough exploration, based on the criteria and involving the collection of specific data, of the beliefs and the objectives underlying the program and the services of the unit; (2) an assessment of the validity of the philosophy and the objectives in terms of current trends and needs in nursing education; (3) an evaluation of the extent to which the unit is achieving the objectives, based on an analysis of all its activities; and (4) a careful consideration of various ways and means by which the objectives may be more fully attained.

The data accumulated as a result of self-study activities should serve two major purposes: (1) as a basis for continuing development of the program and services of the educational unit in nursing and (2) as a basis for evidence to be included in the self-evaluation report to be submitted to the board of review.

The self-evaluation report is used by the board of review as the primary document when it evaluates the program in nursing. Therefore, the importance of this report cannot be minimized. It is essential that the report be based upon

the criteria currently in use for the particular type of nursing program. Faculty are responsible for presenting in the report evidence making clear how the criteria are being met. Guides for the preparation of self-evaluation or progress reports may be obtained from NLN. Also, assistance may be obtained from NLN staff through correspondence, telephone calls, office consultation, and conferences at NLN meetings.

Submitting the Report

Associate degree programs.—The administrator of the unit in nursing should send one copy of the self-evaluation report and one copy of the college catalog to *each* of the accreditation visitors. The reports should be received by the visitors *at least one month* before the scheduled date of the visit. Ten additional copies of the report and the catalog should be sent to the *Department of Associate Degree Programs, National League for Nursing, 10 Columbus Circle, New York, New York 10019* one month prior to the scheduled visit. Ten collated copies of supplementary materials suggested by the visitors for the use of the board of review should be sent to NLN by the unit not later than one week after the completion of the visit. Additional materials pertaining to significant developments in the program effected after the visit may also be submitted to the board through the department.

Baccalaureate and higher degree programs.—The administrator of the unit in nursing should send one copy of the evaluation report and one copy of the current catalog to *each* of the accreditation visitors. The reports should be received by the visitors *at least one month* before the scheduled date of the visit. Twelve additional copies of the report and the catalog should be sent to the *Department of Baccalaureate and Higher Degree Programs, National League for Nursing, 10 Columbus Circle, New York, New York 10019* one month prior to the scheduled visit. Twelve collated copies of supplementary materials suggested by the visitors for the use of the board of review should be sent to NLN by the unit not later than one week after the completion of the visit. Additional materials pertaining to significant developments in the program effected after the visit may also be submitted to the board through the department.

Diploma programs.—The administrator of the nursing program should send one copy of the self-evaluation report, one copy of the school catalog, and one copy of the tentative plan for the visit to *each* of the accreditation visitors the day before the start of the visit. If information pertinent to the program appears in the catalog of a college or university, a copy of the catalog should also be sent to each visitor. Within one week after the conclusion of the visit, 10 copies of the self-evaluation report, including any revisions or additional information suggested by the visitors, and 10 copies of the school catalog should be sent to the *Board of Review for Diploma Programs, National League for Nursing, 10 Columbus Circle, New York, New York 10019.*

Practical nursing programs.—The administrator of the practical nursing program should send three copies of the self-evaluation report and three copies of the school catalog to the *Department of Practical Nursing Programs, National League for Nursing, 10 Columbus Circle, New York, New York 10019*. The arrangements for the visit will be completed by the department. Within the week following the conclusion of the visit, seven additional sets of the above materials and any additional materials suggested by the visitors for the use of the board of review should be sent to the Department of Practical Nursing Programs.

Stage 4—The Accreditation Visit

The Purpose of the Visit

The purpose of the visit is to verify, clarify, and amplify the self-evaluation report prepared by the faculty so that the board of review will have a clear and complete picture of the program(s) in nursing. It is the responsibility of the visiting team members to prepare a report that supplements the program's self-evaluation report. The visitors' report also includes their impressions of the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

NLN regards all details connected with a visit as confidential. Notification of an impending visit is sent to the appropriate state board of nursing and accrediting agencies, but notice of a visit does not constitute an invitation to participate in it. However, the school may invite any person it wishes to participate in the visit.

The Visiting Team

In advance of the date of the visit, NLN will provide the educational unit in nursing with information pertaining to the visit and the names of the prospective visitors. If any one of these visitors is not acceptable to the faculty, the department should be notified, and another name will be submitted.

The visiting team is made up of two or more members according to the complexity of the setting and/or the diversity of educational programs to be visited. The members are chosen on the basis of experience and competence in the particular type or types of nursing education, and the number is sufficient to encompass the necessary activities in a relatively short visit and to facilitate balanced judgment of the observations that are made. Usually, the visitors are faculty members from accredited programs in the region but not in the state in which the unit is located. Departmental staff also serve as members of visiting teams. One member of the team is designated as the senior visitor, but all members work closely together and share responsibility for all aspects of the visit.

One of the visitors is present at the board of review meeting when the program visited is being discussed.

If a unit in nursing wishes to have an additional person, such as a hospital administrator or a regional association generalist, serve on the team, the arrangement is made with the understanding that the institution will be fully responsible for the person's expenses in participating in the accrediting visit. In the case of a request for the addition of a generalist to the team, the generalist is appointed by the appropriate regional association to accompany and serve in an advisory capacity to the NLN representatives and to participate in any way appropriate to his cooperative function. In the event of a request for the addition of a hospital administrator, NLN will send to the institution the names of administrators who have been oriented to the accreditation program. Responsibility for the selection of the administrator and for communication with the administrator of choice rests with the institution. The institution is asked to notify NLN of its selection, so that NLN may include the generalist or the hospital administrator in its plans for the visit and provide him with the same information about the visit and the program to be visited as it gives to its own representatives. NLN will appreciate receiving a copy of any report made by such a visitor.

Coordination of Visits With Those of Other Agencies

NLN welcomes the opportunity to cooperate with any agency in appropriate ways in accrediting activities of mutual concern. The decision to have a coordinated visit rests with the institution or the educational unit in nursing.

Regional Accrediting Agencies

Whenever possible, NLN visits are planned cooperatively with other accrediting agencies. Since the policies of the agencies differ with regard to the intervals between periodic revisits to institutions already accredited, it is not always possible for NLN to visit an educational unit in nursing in conjunction with a visit to the institution by another accrediting agency. However, NLN will adjust its schedule of visits and revisits to conform with the accrediting agency's schedule of visitation whenever it is possible to do so.

Visits for accrediting purposes that are of mutual concern fall into two general categories, and the arrangements for them differ accordingly. For the present, these are:

I. At the time of another agency's visit to an institution, the educational unit in nursing is seeking initial or continued NLN accreditation of one or more of its programs.
   A. Nurse educators selected by NLN will serve as members of the other agency's evaluation team and will prepare for the agency a report on

the educational unit in nursing of the nature specified by the agency.

B. The NLN representatives will prepare a separate report of the kind specified by the particular NLN board of review.

C. NLN and the agency will exchange confidential office copies of their evaluation reports and will inform each other of actions taken on those institutions in which both are interested.

D. NLN will appreciate receiving a copy of those sections of the agency's report that refer to the educational unit in nursing.

II. At the time of another agency's visit to an institution, the educational unit in nursing is not being visited for NLN evaluation.

A. At the request of the agency, NLN will provide a panel of qualified nurse faculty members from which the agency may select a nurse representative.

B. The nurse representative will function as a regular member of the agency team.

C. The fiscal arrangements will be between the nurse representative and the agency.

D. NLN will appreciate receiving a copy of those sections of the agency's report that refer to the educational unit in nursing.

State Boards

If an educational unit in nursing wishes to invite a state board representative to participate in an NLN visit, it is understood that the representative functions only in the capacity of an observer.

If a unit wishes to have an impending NLN visit coordinated with a state board visit, the unit should notify NLN of the decision. It should be understood that the state board representative is not a member of the NLN team. The NLN team and the state board representative may, however, participate jointly in such activities as conferences with the faculty, students, and other groups. Many of the activities of the NLN team and those of the state board representative will necessarily be carried out separately, since both the purposes of NLN's program of voluntary accreditation and its criteria differ from the purposes of state reregistration and the standards of the state licensing authority. For example, judgments as to the strengths and weaknesses of a program are not made mutually, and the state board representative does not participate in the writing of the NLN team's report or in the reading of the report. Separate reports are prepared for submission to the respective agencies.

Arrangements for the Visit

Housing.—In the case of a visit to an associate degree program, a baccalaureate or higher degree program, or a practical nursing program, as soon as a

definite date for the visit has been set, the administrator of the educational unit in nursing should make arrangements for suitable hotel accommodations for the visitors in the community or communities in which there are facilities the school uses that must be visited. Visitors should be housed in single rooms, preferably adjacent to or near each other. Good lighting, accommodations for reading and writing, and restaurant facilities are essential. In the case of a visit to a diploma program, NLN's Department of Diploma Programs makes arrangements for accommodations for the visitors in the community in which the school is located and then notifies the school of the arrangements.

Office space and materials.—The administrator of the unit in nursing arranges for an office or conference room (preferably in or adjacent to the office of the educational unit in nursing) in which materials for visitors can be assembled and in which they can read and work during the period of the visit. Among the materials that, if available, should be assembled in this room are the faculty handbook, student handbook, budget, minutes of recent meetings (not more than two years of meetings) of the faculty organization and its committees, outlines of all courses for which the educational unit in nursing is responsible, faculty studies, samples of student projects or papers, class and clinical laboratory schedule for the week of the visit, latest state board report, annual reports of the administrator of the unit in nursing to the chief administrative officer of the institution, rules and regulations of the educational unit in nursing, and any other interpretive materials the faculty deems essential to the visitors' understanding of the program being surveyed. *One* copy of each of these materials is sufficient. They will be used only during the visit and left at the school upon completion of the visit unless permission to do otherwise has been granted by the administrator of the unit in nursing. Records of students enrolled and of recent graduates of the program need not be pulled in advance of the visit, since visitors can review these during the visit in the office where they are filed.

In addition to the above, it is recommended that before the end of the visit, the school provide the visitors with a typewritten list of the names and titles of all the persons interviewed during the visit. The inclusion of such a list in the visitors' report promotes accuracy and averts the need for extensive corrections in the draft of the report.

Conduct of the Visit

Visitors will meet upon their arrival to discuss the visit. They will meet with the administrator of the educational unit in nursing during the morning of the first day in order to complete the plans for the visit. In advance planning, it should be remembered that visitors will need to have some time set aside on each day of the visit for study of the additional materials the faculty has assembled for their attention.

The length of time visitors spend on campus depends on several factors—for

example, the complexity of the program(s) of the educational unit in nursing, the geographical location of the various resources used for student experiences, and the number of students. Visitors usually spend from two to three days in attending meetings and conferences and making observations on campus. Correspondence from NLN will indicate the inclusive dates of the visit. Activities usually planned to take place during the visit include: preliminary, interim, and closing conferences with the administrator of the nursing unit and her assistants, if any; conferences with groups of faculty or with individual faculty members and/or a meeting with the entire nursing faculty; conferences with administrative officers of the institution concerned with the program in nursing; visits to selected agencies where visitors can observe and talk with students in the clinical setting (visitors usually do not visit clinical facilities where there are no students at the time of the visit); conferences with nursing students; visits to appropriate school facilities and resources; review of the various materials prepared by the faculty; and review of appropriate student records. **Visitors representing the Department of Baccalaureate and Higher Degree Programs will look at all offerings of the educational unit in nursing, even though the unit may be seeking accreditation of only one or two of its programs.**

Upon completion of the survey, the visitors will read their report. Selection of the audience is the prerogative of the administrator.

The Visitors' Report

The visitors' report includes verification of data, documentary statements, and additional descriptive material essential to a clear and concise picture of all aspects of the educational program(s) in nursing. It also includes the visitors' assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the program. This report is intended to supplement rather than to duplicate the school's self-evaluation report. If the data presented by the faculty in its report is complete, the visitors may have little or nothing to report in some areas.

Visitors send the handwritten report to NLN for typing. Except for diploma programs, typed copies are sent to both the chief administrative officer of the institution and the administrator of the educational unit in nursing for review and correction of any errors in factual data; in the case of a diploma program, a copy of the report is sent to the administrator of the unit in nursing only. When the copy is returned to NLN, corrections of a factual nature are made. Any comments made by the school are appended to the report.

Stage 5—Evaluation by the Board of Review

The evaluation of a program in nursing and the decision as to whether or not it is to be accredited by NLN are the responsibilities of the particular

board of review. The board uses as the basis for its evaluation the faculty's self-evaluation report, the school catalog, and the report of the visiting team.

The Boards of Review

Each board of review is responsible for the application of the criteria approved by the related council in the evaluation of programs for accreditation. It develops its own operating procedures within the established policies.

Each board has regular members and alternates. The Board of Review for Diploma Programs also has members-at-large. All members are chosen from faculties of educational units that offer NLN-accredited programs and are appointed by the executive committee for a four-year term, after which reappointment is not permitted for two years.

The members of each board hold administrative or teaching positions, come from various sections of the country, and represent educational units of varying size and units in both public and private educational institutions. In addition to the foregoing, the members of the Board of Review for Baccalaureate and Higher Degree Programs represent both baccalaureate and masters degree programs and all major clinical areas of nursing. An NLN staff member serves as secretary to the particular board without vote.

The American Hospital Association has the privilege of sending a liaison member and an alternate liaison member to meetings of the Board of Review for Diploma Programs.

Schedule of Meetings

Each board of review meets twice a year. At each meeting, the board evaluates those programs and reports that have been scheduled for consideration and acts on any special requests.

Attendance of Unit Representatives at Meetings

A board of review may request an educational unit to send representatives to a meeting. Units with special problems may send representatives to meet with the board at their request. Such a request should be made through the appropriate department of NLN. **If a member of the visiting team cannot be present at the board meeting, the unit will be invited to send a representative or representatives to meet with the board.**

Board Actions

In the case of the Board of Review for Associate Degree Programs, a majority of the members must agree on the action to be taken in regard to each program reviewed. For the three other boards, the proportion is three-

quarters of the members. The following motions constitute the choices of action that may be taken in regard to a program.

1. **That the program be given initial or continued accreditation:**
   a. **With recommendations.**
   b. **Without recommendations.**
   c. **With a request for a progress report within a specified period of time.**
   d. **With warning and a time limit (used only in connection with continued accreditation).**
   e. **With other specified conditions or combinations of the above.**
2. **That initial accreditation be deferred for a specified time pending receipt of additional evidence based on one or more of the following:**
   a. **A progress report indicating fulfillment of recommendations.**
   b. **A supplementary visit.**
   c. **A meeting of representatives of the unit with the board.**
   d. **Other specified conditions or combinations of the above.**
3. **That initial accreditation be denied. (When this action is taken, the board of review identifies the criteria that have not been met and makes recommendations to assist the unit to meet them. Except in the case of a diploma program, the unit has the privilege of reapplying for accreditation without a revisit within the next two years.)**
4. **That accreditation be withdrawn. (When this action is taken, the board of review identifies the criteria that are not being met and makes recommendations to assist the unit to meet them. The unit has the privilege of applying for accreditation whenever it feels it is ready and proceeds as for initial accreditation.)**

Progress report.—**A board may request a progress report at any time for cogent and clearly delineated reasons. The board's evaluation of the progress report constitutes the basis for a decision on the timing of the next visit.** When a progress report is requested, specific recommendations are made by the board. The date for submission of the report is related to the reason or reasons for the request, and the unit is asked to address the report to the board's recommendations. The earlier reports (the unit's and the visitors') are used in conjunction with the progress report to form a basis for board action. The board may take action to retain the previously scheduled date, move the date to a time preceding the previously scheduled date, or move the date beyond the previously scheduled date.

Warning.—**A board places an accredited program on warning when the program has made limited progress in regard to improvement and the resolution of weaknesses since the last visit or the submission of a progress report or when the program has lost some of its strengths since the last visit and is therefore failing to meet many of the criteria. When a program has been**

placed on warning, the board may request the submission of a progress report or a revisit within a specified period of time. The report or the result of the visit constitutes the basis for board action to remove or to continue the warning.

Deferral of action.—**A board defers action on a program being considered for initial accreditation when there is evidence that there are weaknesses of sufficient import to counterbalance the existing strengths but that the weaknesses can be minimized or eliminated in a short period of time.** The board's reevaluation in such an instance is based on the additional evidence and the significant developments presented in a progress report submitted by the program within the two years following the board's decision to defer action and/or on the outcome of a supplementary visit made within the same period.

Supplementary visit.—**A board may schedule a supplementary visit in order that the evidence of progress in regard to the recommendations specified by the board may be clarified, verified, and amplified. The number of visitors and the number of days scheduled are determined by the board in relation to the individual unit and program situation.**

Denial of initial accreditation.—**A board denies initial accreditation when a program does not present sufficient evidence of educational excellence to warrant accreditation.**

Withdrawal of accreditation.—**A board withdraws accreditation when a program that has been placed on continued warning does not present sufficient evidence of educational excellence to warrant continued accreditation. Such action follows an evaluation of evidence presented through a visit made within the two years following the board's action to continue the warning.**

A diploma program that has been denied initial accreditation or from which accreditation has been withdrawn may request a conference with a member of the board of review and a department staff member designated by the board. The purpose of such a conference, which may be held at the school or NLN headquarters, is to interpret the accrediting program, the evaluation processes of accreditation, and the board's decision and recommendations.

Notification of Institution Regarding Board Action

The secretary to the board transmits official notice of the board's action and recommendations to the administrator of the controlling institution and a copy of the letter and recommendations to the administrator of the educational unit in nursing. Two copies of the visitors' report are sent to the unit. The copies of the faculty's self-evaluation report are not returned.

The Appeal

A program in nursing that has been denied initial or continuing accreditation may appeal the decision before a panel representing the executive committee of the appropriate council of agency members. The appeal must be filed with the secretary to the particular board of review within 30 days of receipt of the board's decision. The appeal is based on the evidence presented in the faculty's self-evaluation report, the visitors' report, and the school catalog. Subsequent developments or plans made after the visit are not appropriate to the appeal.

Representatives of the unit present written evidence to the panel and meet with the panel to answer questions or make additional statements. **On the basis of the evidence submitted at the time of the visit and the relevant data presented during the appeal, the appeal panel determines whether the board of review made the correct decision. It rules either to uphold the decision of the board or to request the board to reconsider its decision.**

In the case of an appeal by an associate degree program or a practical nursing program, the panel is composed of the chairman of the executive committee of the council or his or her designate and three additional members of the council appointed by the chairman. The chairman of the board of review and the senior visitor are present when the appeal is presented and participate in the discussion but not in the decision.

In the case of an appeal by a baccalaureate or a higher degree program, the panel is composed of the chairman of the executive committee of the council or a member of that committee designated by him or her, who serves as chairman of the panel, and three additional members appointed by the chairman, two of whom are nurse educators representing NLN-accredited programs and one of whom is a general educator. A member of the board of review is present when the appeal is presented and participates in the discussion but not in the decision.

In the case of an appeal by a diploma program, the panel is composed of five members: the vice-chairman of the executive committee of the council, who serves as chairman of the panel, a nurse member of the executive committee, a nurse member-at-large, a nonnurse member-at-large, and a hospital administrator. A member of the board of review who participated in the evaluation of the program and one of the visitors are present when the appeal is presented and participate in the discussion but not in the decision.

Stage 6—Continuing Self-Evaluation and Ongoing Program Improvement

A program that has been accredited by NLN must continue to satisfy current NLN criteria and take steps for continued improvement in order to maintain its

accredited status. In the process of improving the total program, the administrative officers and the faculty should give equal attention to the recommendations made by the board of review and the weaknesses identified by the faculty through its ongoing self-evaluation during the interim between visits.

Periodic Reevaluation

Associate degree programs and baccalaureate and higher degree programs that have been accredited by NLN are usually revisited and reevaluated for accreditation every eight years. The usual period between visits to diploma programs and practical nursing programs is six years. However, if a diploma program has held NLN accreditation for eight or more years and has not been warned during the six years that preceded the year of the current visit, the period between visits may be extended to seven years. A board of review may request more frequent visits to a particular program than indicated above.

The appropriate department of NLN sends a reminder to the administrator of the educational unit in nursing that a reevaluation of the program or programs is due during a specified year, and a suitable time for the visit is arranged. The procedures for reevaluation are the same as those for initial accreditation. Initial accreditation of additional programs can be requested in conjunction with reevaluation of an accredited program(s).

The following policies apply to requests by accredited programs for a delayed revisit.

1. **A request for a delay of a revisit may be granted by the secretary to the board of review for one period between board meetings.**
2. **The following requests must be referred to the appropriate board for decision:**
   a. **A request for a delay for a period of longer duration than that cited above.**
   b. **A request for a second delay regardless of the time period.**
   c. **A request for a delay of a reevaluation visit received from an accredited program on warning in regard to continued accreditation.**
   d. **A request for a delay when the board has scheduled a visit within a period shorter than the regular interval between visits.**

Changes in an Educational Unit

When an educational unit in nursing with an accredited program plans to (1) institute a change in the control of the program, (2) institute a change in objectives that would affect the position for which the graduate will be prepared, or (3) markedly reorganize the program and its courses, the educational unit shall submit to the board of review an outline of the major aspects of the planned change(s) and the date set for the implementation of the change(s). On the basis of the information submitted, the board may (1) continue accreditation of the program and reaffirm the scheduled revisit, (2) request a progress report, or (3) schedule an earlier revisit.

When NLN staff are informed of changes occurring in an institution offering an NLN-accredited program that might jeopardize the NLN-accreditation status of the program, appropriate staff will ask the administrator of the unit for clarification and then take appropriate action.

Change in State Board Approval

If the state-approval status of an NLN-accredited program is changed or removed, the administrator of the program shall immediately transmit this information to the board of review, together with the reasons given for the decision and the plans made by the program to become fully reinstated. The board will decide on further action to be taken.

Change in Accreditation Status of an Institution

If an institution that offers an NLN-accredited program loses its accreditation, the administrator of the program shall immediately submit to the board of review a report explaining the reasons for the decision, the effect of the decision on the program in nursing, and the plans made by the institution to become fully reinstated.

Publication of the Lists

The official lists of all currently accredited programs of the various types are published annually in *Nursing Outlook,* **the official journal of NLN.** Supplementary lists of newly accredited programs are published in the interim between appearances of the complete lists.

Confidentiality of Accreditation Information

All data, observations, conversations, conclusions, reports, and minutes relating to NLN accreditation activities are strictly confidential. Acceptance of membership on a board of review or on a visiting team constitutes a contractual agreement to safeguard the confidentiality of information acquired in these capacities. However, data about institutions and their programs in nursing have considerable intrinsic value for research in nursing education. **NLN files are opened to persons doing bona fide research only when, in the judgment of the general director and/or the director of the particular department, the project will contribute to the achievement of NLN objectives and is under competent direction. Reports subsequently prepared by the research worker may not identify a particular school. Materials resulting from the study may not be released without the approval of the general director and the director of the particular department.**

APPENDIX

Closing Diploma Programs

When NLN is notified that an accredited program in nursing is closing, the following policies are applied in order to safeguard the validity of accreditation and to ascertain whether the program continues to merit accreditation. These policies take into consideration (1) the accreditation status of the program at the time NLN is notified that the program is closing, (2) the time of closing (graduation of the last student group), and (3) the time of the next scheduled visit or report.

1. **Program accredited without qualification.**
   a. **When a visit is scheduled to take place or a report is due within the calendar year of the closing, the board of review cancels the visit or the report and continues accreditation until the closing.**
   b. **When a visit is scheduled to take place within the calendar year preceding the calendar year of the closing, the board requests that the program, prior to the time of the scheduled visit, submit a report that describes fully the plan for closing. Such a report should include the provisions made for retention of faculty, the arrangements made for the continuation of essential student services, and the ways and means established to continue a quality program until the last student has graduated. If the board considers the report satisfactory, it cancels the visit and continues accreditation until the closing. If the board does not consider the report satisfactory, it schedules a short visit or reaffirms the originally scheduled visit.**
   c. **When a report is due within the calendar year preceding the calendar year of the closing, the board requests that the report include a full description of the plan for closing and of the other matters cited above in 1-b. If the board considers the report satisfactory, it continues accreditation until the closing. If the board considers the report unsatisfactory, it schedules a short visit for the collection of appropriate additional data.**
   d. **When a visit is scheduled to take place two or more calendar years prior to the calendar year of the closing, the board authorizes the scheduled visit and requests that the program include in its self-evaluation report or that the visitors include in their report a full description of the plan for closing and of the other matters cited above in 1-b.**
2. **Program accredited with warning.**
   a. **When a report is due within the calendar year preceding the calendar year of the closing, the board requests that the report include a full description of the plan for closing. The plan should include the provisions made for the retention of faculty, the arrangements made for the continuation of essential student services, and the ways and means established to minimize or eliminate weaknesses and to offer a quality program until the last student**

has graduated. If the board considers the report satisfactory, it removes the warning and continues accreditation until the closing. If the board does not consider the report satisfactory, it either schedules a short visit for the collection of appropriate additional data on which to make a decision about continued accreditation or continues accreditation with warning until the closing.

b. When a report is due within the calendar year of the closing, the board of review cancels the report and continues accreditation with warning until the closing.

c. When a visit is scheduled to take place within the calendar year of the closing, the board authorizes a short visit at the earliest date possible before its next meeting to ascertain the complete plan for closing and the other matters cited above in 2-a. On the basis of the reports of the visit, the board decides whether to continue accreditation until the closing or to remove the name of the school from the list of accredited programs.

d. When a visit is scheduled to take place one or more calendar years preceding the calendar year of the closing, the board requires that the visit as scheduled be made in accordance with regular accreditation procedures.

3. If a program that is planning to close refuses to comply with the board's request(s), such action will constitute a declaration of choice to have accreditation status removed, and the board will take action to that effect.

4. If a program that has informed NLN of its plans to close and has been notified of the board's decision to continue accreditation then changes its plans to close and decides to continue operating beyond the initially announced closing date, a visit will be scheduled at the earliest date possible, and the procedure to be followed will depend upon the accreditation status of the program at the time the announcements about the closing and the change of plans were made.

5. If a program closes in the interim between board meetings without prior notice to NLN, the closing brings with it the end of NLN accreditation.